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Rainer Buryel and His German Unification Play

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MEMO NO.: 1587/66

SUBJECT: Rainer Barzel and his German Unification Play ✓

REQUESTED OR ORIGINATED BY: Self-initiated by the European Area, OCI, to explain the Motivation behind the recent Barzel unification proposal.

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RAINER BARZEL AND HIS GERMAN UNIFICATION PLOY

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No. 1587/66

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
30 June 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM*

Rainer Barzel and His German Unification Ploy

SUMMARY

The unification plan presented by Rainer Barzel in a New York City speech of 17 June has earned the Bundestag "majority leader" a stiff rebuff from his fellow Christian Democrats. Barzel claims that he wished to test Soviet intentions and seize the unification initiative from the Social Democrats, but his overriding aim appears to have been the promotion of his own chances to succeed Ludwig Erhard as chancellor. Instead, Barzel has suffered a sharp, though probably not an enduring defeat.

*Prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence

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1. The German unification program presented recently by Bonn "majority leader" Rainer Barzel has been looked on by some commentators as a major new initiative, and has been hailed in some quarters as an act of courageous statesmanship. This roseate view is at odds both with the history of previous unification proposals and with the nature of Barzel himself.

2. The heart of the Barzel proposals is reminiscent of most other unification plans, including those sponsored in the past by the "big three" Western Allies--the US, the UK, and France. East - West German commissions would be formed to deal with the practical matters connected with unification. The commissions would be responsible to a "big four" standing group (the Western three plus the USSR), which would review the efforts of the commissions and work out the over-all unification scenario.

3. As an inducement to Moscow, Barzel offers a takeover of the East German trade agreement with the Soviet Union, and suggests an annual increase of five percent in the shipment of "advantageous supplies" over the next 20 years. This proposal is clearly a variation of the idea, prevalent for years in German intellectual circles, that the Soviets may be seduced into a political deal by economic wiles. Erhard himself, shortly following his accession to the chancellorship, seemed enchanted by this concept, and even talked in terms of billions of dollars in reparations for Moscow. US officials advised Erhard against such an approach on the grounds that the Soviets would be repelled by it.

4. Apparently striving for a touch of originality, Barzel suggested that Soviet troops could remain in a reunited Germany as part of a general European security arrangement. It has been fairly commonplace for West Germans to speak in terms of "sacrifices" in behalf of unification, but normally they speak only of such measures as a large reparations outlay or a shrinkage of Germany's national boundaries. Rarely do they go as far as Barzel and suggest both a partially neutralized and a less than fully sovereign German state. It is this aspect of the Barzel thinking which has grabbed the headlines and left his fellow Christian Democrats in a state of stifled outrage.

5. There remains the question as to why Barzel felt it necessary to go as far as he did, in view of the current "stand-pat" position of the Erhard government on the German question. It is true that Foreign Minister Schroeder has had his experts studying the issue, but they have yet to put forth any new initiatives. Nor has Schroeder himself proposed any new projects--such as a personal trip to Moscow--as had been rumored earlier this year.



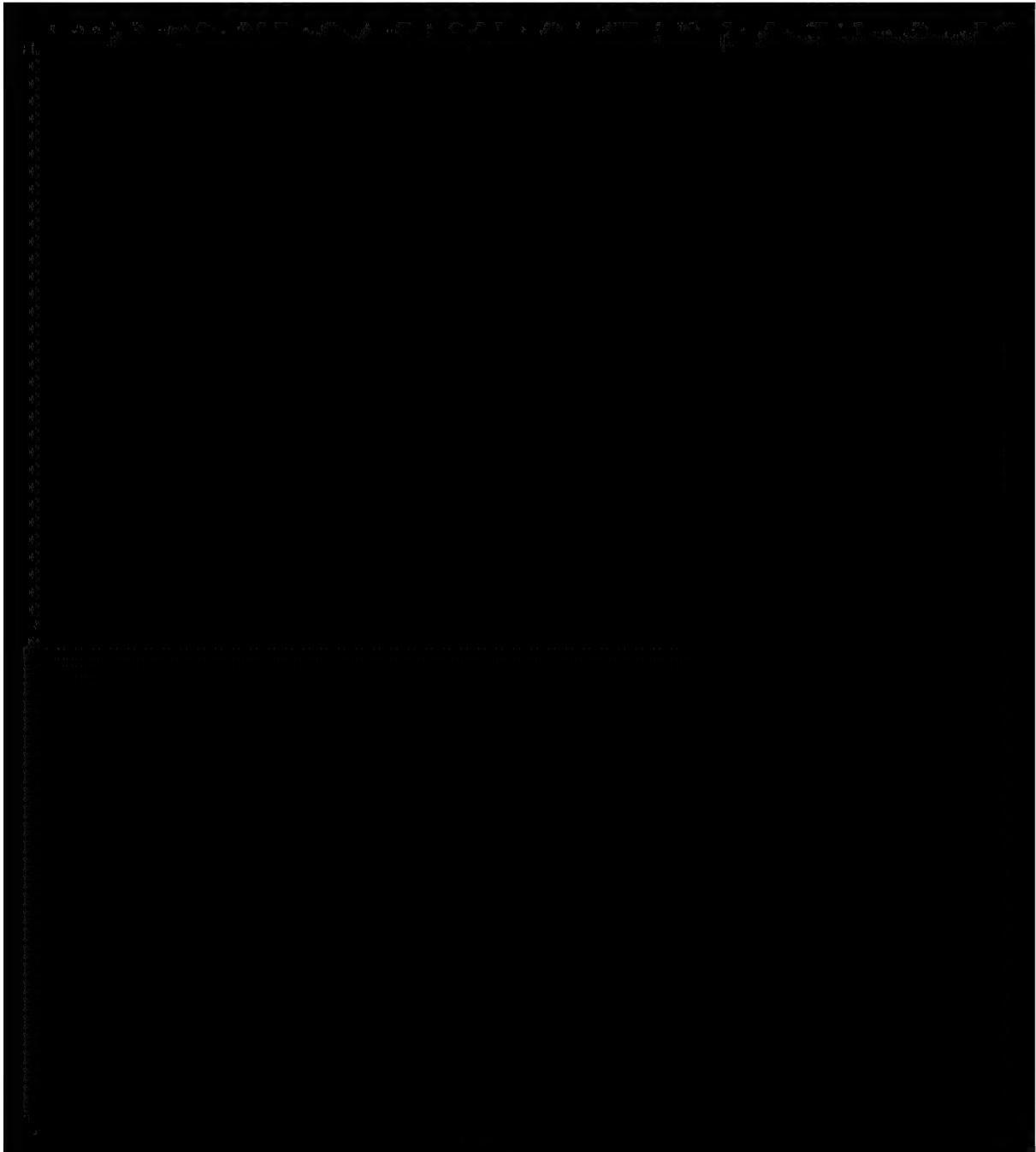
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9. Following the March CDU convention, Barzel did little to help his cause by speaking on all sides of one of the most important issues of the day--the proposed speaker exchange between the Social Democrats and the East German SED. Subsequently, Barzel, pleading illness and the need for a rest cure, went into political hibernation.

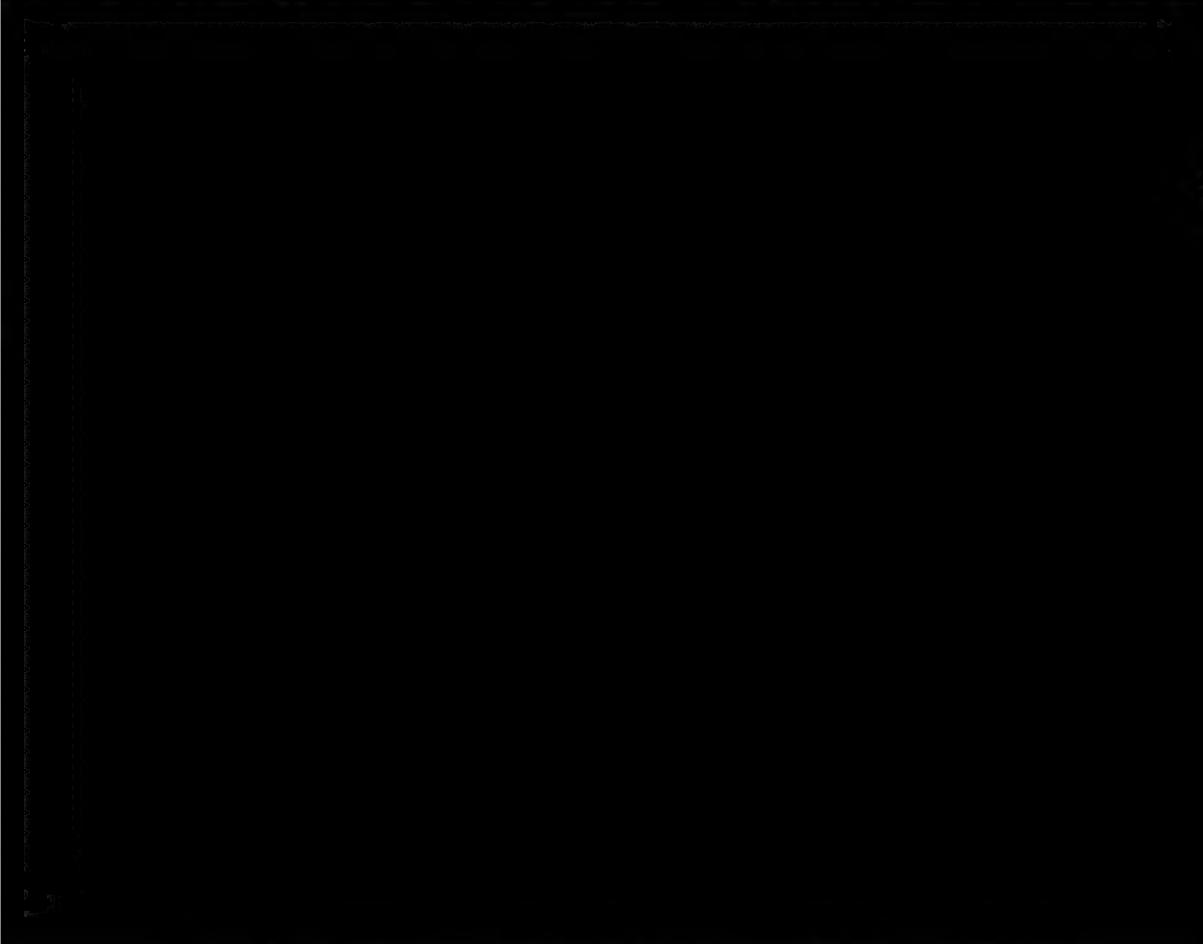
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10. Barzel's re-emergence has been spectacular. Riding a vehicle already set into gear by the opposition Social Democrats, Barzel has attempted to jump ahead of all others on the unification issue. He has done so--with apparent deliberateness--during a Washington visit, and thus given his views more immediacy and resonance than they might otherwise have had.

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17. In addition, Barzel has earned himself plaudits elsewhere, including some from the camp of the enemy. A sizable number of press commentators have viewed the Barzel program as a timely effort to overcome the "sterility" of the Erhard position, and many were aggrieved that Barzel received such rough treatment at the hands of his party. The press service of the SPD paid Barzel a backhanded compliment by greeting his effort as a welcome if belated endorsement of the Social Democratic viewpoint.

18. Barzel has claimed that it was his aim to demonstrate that the opposition SPD was not the only group capable of new ideas on German unification. Willy Brandt, speaking at the early June convention of the SPD, had trumpeted a multiplicity of ideas on how best to approach the German question, and had dwelt with particular fondness on SPD plans for a speaker exchange with the East German Communist Party.

This latter initiative found widespread favor in West Germany, much to the annoyance of the CDU, which felt it had been upstaged by its rival on the import German question. Barzel, exercising his usual self-assurance, was not above trumping the opposition.

19. Another aim of the New York speech, according to its author, was to call the Soviet bluff on the German issue by demonstrating willingness to meet the main Soviet objections to unification. Barzel said he had anticipated the quick Soviet rejection, which, when it came, apparently helped save Barzel from even sharper criticism within his own party. It is unclear to what extent the De Gaulle visit to Moscow may have been a factor in Barzel's planning, but it seems probable that Barzel felt it unwise to allow a Frenchman alone to put the spurs to the Soviet leadership on this single most important issue for the German Federal Republic.

20. It comes as no surprise that Barzel in order to make the largest possible political splash would choose the topic of German unification. Unfortunately for his sake, he overstepped the boundaries of "conventional wisdom," particularly with regard to the proposal for stationing Soviet troops on the soil of a reunified Germany. There is endemic in this thought the prospect of a neutralized, demilitarized Germany, and as the US Embassy Bonn points out, there has thus far been no perceptible sentiment for accepting this end as a price for German unification.

21. Barzel may hope, however, that in the long run such sentiment will come to life and proliferate, and that among responsible Bonn politicians he will be recognized as a pioneer of this point of view. In the meantime, he can dedicate himself to rebuilding his parliamentary and party positions. As a young political careerist, he can afford to wait.

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